

Message Text

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40

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 041311Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7756

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COMUSMACTHAI

DIRNSA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 2395

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: STATUS OF U.S. RESIDUAL FORCES

REF: STATE 025895

SUMMARY. AMBASSADOR MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI FEBRUARY 4 AT LATTER'S REQUEST TO DISCUSS US RESIDUAL PRESENCE. THAI SIDE TABLED DIPLOMATIC NOTE CONTAINING GENERAL PRINCIPLES TO GOVERN RESIDUAL ACTIVITIES AND PERSONNEL. AMBASSADOR HANDED OVER US NOTE ON TURNOVER RAMASUN, KO KHA AND CHIANG MAI. FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES IN APPROACH EMERGED, IN THAT THAI SIDE WISHED TO TERMINATE OLD ARRANGEMENTS AND SUBSTITUTE GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT WOULD CONSIDERABLY EXPAND THAI CONTROL, WHILE US APPROACH IS TO CONTINUE EXISTING AGREEMENTS IN FORCE PENDING NEGOTIATION OF NEW ONES. THAI PUT US ON NOTICE THAT UNLESS GENERAL PRINCIPLES WERE AGREED BY END OF FEBRUARY, OPERATIONS AT INSTALLATIONS MIGHT BE SUSPENDED. AMBASSADOR COUNTERED BY STRESSING MUTUAL INTEREST IN THESE OPERATIONS, REVIEWED AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ALREADY REACHED AND ARGUED VIGOROUSLY THAT OPERATIONS SHOULD CONTINUE UNDER EXISTING GROUND

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RULES UNTIL NEW AGREEMENTS COULD BE NEGOTIATED.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WILL FOLLOW SEPTTEL.
END SUMMARY.

1. AMBASSADOR, ACCOMPANIED BY POMILCOUNS, CALLED ON MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN FEBRUARY 4 AT CHATCHAI'S REQUEST. ALSO PRESENT ON MFA SIDE WERE UNDER SECRETARY ANAND PANYARACHUN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS KOSON SINTHAWANON, AND AMERICAN DESK CHIEF WORAPHUT CHAIYANAM. CHATCHAI OPENED MEETING BY HANDING AMBASSADOR DIPLOMATIC NOTE (TEXT BEING SENT SEPTTEL) OUTLINING "PRINCIPLES" TO GOVERN US RESIDUAL PRESENCE IN THAILAND. AFTER READING NOTE, AMBASSADOR OBSERVED THAT SOME OF PRINCIPLES WERE VAGUE AND GENERAL IN NATURE AND SUSCEPTIBLE OF VARYING INTERPRETATION. OTHER PRINCIPLES" WERE IN FACT MORE SPECIFIC THAN THAT WORD WOULD IMPLY.

2. HE SAID THAT IT HAD BEEN HIS IMPRESSION THAT AGREEMENT HAD ALREADY BEEN REACHED IN PRINCIPLE ON THE CONTINUANCE OF A CERTAIN US PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND, AND THAT HE HAD ASSUMED THAT THE STATUS OF THIS PRESENCE COULD BE GOVERNED BY EXISTING

AGREEMENTS RATHER THAN THE NEGOTIATION OF NEW ONES, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM. HE NOTED THAT THE MARCH 20 DEADLINE WAS NEARING AND FELT THAT THAT GAVE ADDED MERIT TO THE IDEA OF ADHERING TO EXISTING AGREEMENTS, AT LEAST UNTIL SUCH TIME AS NEW ONES COULD BE NEGOTIATED WITH DUE DELIBERATION. HE HANDED OVER THE US NOTE.

3. UNDER SECRETARY ANAND, WHO DOMINATED THE DISCUSSION ON THE THAI SIDE, EXPLAINED THAT THE GENERAL THRUST OF THE THAI PROPOSAL WAS TO PUT BASIC PRINCIPLES IN WRITING. THE THAI DID NOT WISH TO DWELL UPON MISTAKES AND FLAWS OF THE PAST (THIS WAS CLEARLY A REFERENCE TO EXISTING AGREEMENTS), BUT IT WAS THE POLICY OF THE RTG TO APPROACH THE PROBLEM ON THE BASIS OF A NEW PROCEDURE, AND THE RTG WISHED THE
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US TO ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLES CONTAINED IN ITS NOTE BEFORE DETAILS COULD BE DISCUSSED. ANAND NOTED THAT PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE STATUS OF US FORCES HAD IN PRACTICE BEEN WORKED OUT SATISFACTORILY IN THE PAST AND IF THERE WERE MUTUAL TRUST, HE SAW NO REASON WHY THE PROPOSED GENERAL PRINCIPLES SHOULD OCCASION US ALARM OR RAISE DOUBTS ABOUT THE MOTIVES OF THE RTG.

4. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT WE HAD APPROACHED THE PROBLEM IN THE BELIEF THAT THERE WAS MUTUAL US-THAI INTEREST IN MAINTAINING CERTAIN US FACILITIES IN THAILAND. REPEATING THAT TIME WAS GETTING SHORT, HE SAID HE HAD THOUGHT THE "GENERAL PRINCIPLES" HAD ALREADY BEEN AGREED IN PREVIOUS DISCUSSION BETWEEN HIMSELF AND MINISTER CHATCHAI. HAVING AGREED, FOR EXAMPLE, TO A US PRESENCE AT UTAPAO, AND WITH THE MARCH 20 PSYCHOLOGICAL WATERSHED IN MIND, IT WAS TOO LATE FOR US NOW TO FIND OURSELVES SUDDENLY CONFRONTED WITH THE NEED TO NEGOTIATE A NEW STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT IN SO SHORT A TIME.

5. HAVING BY THIS TIME READ THE US NOTE, WITH ITS REFERENCE TO THE CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING AGREEMENTS, ANAND AGREED THAT OPERATIONS WOULD CONTINUE, BUT UNDER DIFFERENT CONDITIONS MORE APPROPRIATE TO CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND REFLECTED IN THE THAI PRINCIPLES. HE ALSO SAID THAT THERE WOULD HAVE BE NEGOTIATION OF THE NUMBERS OF PERSONNEL TO BE STATIONED IN THAILAND. AMBASSADOR REMARKED THAT THESE NUMBERS HAD BEEN NEGOTIATED. THE MINISTER HAD BEEN ADVISED THAT THERE WOULD BE ABOUT 4,000 US PERSONNEL IN THAILAND ON MARCH 20, OF WHOM 1,000 WOULD BE ENGAGED IN RETROGRADE OPERATIONS. THESE 1,000 WOULD BE WITHDRAWN AS RETROGRADE OPERATIONS WERE COMPLETED, AND THIS WOULD REDUCE THE US RESIDUAL PRESENCE TO UNDER 3,000. ON MARCH 20, THESE WOULD BE DISTRIBUTED APPROXIMATELY 1,000 AT RAMASUN, APPROXIMATELY 1,000 AT UTAPAO AND APPROXIMATELY 1,000 ENGAGED IN OTHER OPERATIONS, SUCH AS JUSMAG. THE NUMBERS AT RAMASUN WOULD BE REDUCED TO ABOUT
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350 BY ABOUT THE END OF 1976.

6. ANAND SAID THAT THIS DID NOT CONSTITUTE NEGOTIATION AS HE VISUALIZED IT. WHILE CHATCHAI SQUIRMED, ANAND AIRILY DISMISSED CHATCHAI'S PREVIOUS AGREEMENT ON NUMBERS BY SAYING THAT THE MENTION OF FIGURES IN "CASUAL CONVERSATION" DID NOT CONSTITUTE NEGOTIATION. HE WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT HIS DEFINITION OF NEGOTIATION INVOLVED AGREEING ON THE FUNCTIONS TO BE PERFORMED BY THE PERSONNEL AND ON THE MINIMUM NUMBERS NECESSARY TO PERFORM THOSE FUNCTIONS. HE DID NOT PREJUDGE WHAT THOSE NUMBERS WOULD BE.

7. THE AMBASSADOR EXPRESSED HIS SURPRISE AT THE DRIFT THE CONVERSATION WAS TAKING. HIS UNDERSTANDING

OF THE PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED WAS THAT, AGREEMENT
IN PRINCIPLE ON THE OUTLINES OF THE US RESIDUAL
PRESENCE IN THAILAND HAVING BEEN REACHED WITH CHATCHAI,
THE JOINT US-THAI WORKING LEVEL COMMITTEE WHICH WAS
ALREADY MEETING, WAS CHARGED WITH WORKING OUT DETAILS.
HE NOTED THAT THIS COMMITTEE HAD UP TO NOW DEALT
ONLY WITH RAMASUN, AND URGED THAT THE THAI DELEGATION BE AUTHORIZED
TO BEGIN WORK ALSO ON KO KHA AND CHIANG MAI. HE ALSO NOTED THAT
TO OUR KNOWLEDGE NO THAI AUTHORITY HAD BEEN DESIGNATED
TO WORK OUT THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR UTAPAO AND HE SUGGEST-
ED THAT GENERAL SAIYUT THAI CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE,
OR SOMEONE ELSE SHOULD BE EMPOWERED TO OPEN SUCH A DISCUSSION.

NOTE BY OCT: LIMDIS CAPTION REMOVED AND EXDIS CAPTION INSERTED PER IN-
STRUCTIONS S/S-O, MR. MAC FARLANE.

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ACTION SS-25

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P R 041311Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7757
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI
COMUSMACTHAI
DIRNSA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 2395

EXDIS

8. ILLUSTRATING THE DIFFICULTY OF DISCUSSING SPECIFIC
NUMBERS AND FUNCTIONS AT THIS STAGE, THE AMBASSADOR
OBSERVED THAT THE US WOULD PREPARED TO TURN OVER
DET 415 OPERATIONS AT CHIANG MAI TO THE THAI, BUT
THAT UNTIL THIS MATTER COULD BE DISCUSSED, WE WOULD
NOT KNOW IF THE THAI WERE INTERESTED IN TAKING IT
OVER.

9. AT THIS POINT. CHATCHAI IN ONE OF HIS RARE INTERVENTIONS
DURING THE MEETING, SAID THAT HE NEEDED TO KNOW THE PRECISE

NUMBERS AT RAMASUN SO THAT HE COULD ANNOUNCE THEM TO THE PUBLIC.

10. UPPING THE PRESSURE, ANAND SAID THAT THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT HAD ASKED THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO PRESENT THE PROPOSED PRINCIPLES TO THE EMBASSY IN THE HOPE THAT AGREEMENT COULD BE QUICKLY REACHED ON THEM. IF AGREEMENT HAD NOT BEEN REACHED BY THE END OF FEBRUARY, OPERATIONS AT THE INSTALLATIONS MIGHT HAVE TO CEASE.

11. AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE AGAIN EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS PRECISELY HIS CONCERN WITH THE TIGHT TIMETABLE THAT HAD LED HIM TO HOPE THAT ARRANGEMENTS COULD BE WORKED OUT AT THE WORKING LEVEL IN SUCH A WAY THAT BY MARCH 20 A STRUCTURE ACCEPTABLE
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TO THE THAI PUBLIC WOULD BE VISIBLE, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, EXISTING AGREEMENTS COULD CONTINUE IN FORCE SO THAT DISCUSSION OF THE MORE DIFFICULT STATUS OF FORCES QUESTIONS, WHICH WERE LIKELY TO TAKE SOME TIME TO RESOLVE, COULD CONTINUE IN AN UNTROUBLED ATMOSPHERE.

11. ANAND REPEATED THAT AGREEMENT HAD TO BE REACHED ON THE SET OF PRINCIPLES PROPOSED BY THE THAI BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE COULD BE AGREED. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT HE WOULD SUBMIT THE THAI PROPOSALS TO WASHINGTON.

13. ANAND THEN TOOK UP THE U.S. NOTE AND MADE PRELIMINARY COMMENTS ON IT. HE REGARDED ITS LANGUAGE AS UNSATISFACTORY. IT WAS NOT, SAID HE, THE NOTE THE THAI HAD WANTED. IT DID NOT TURN OVER TITLE TO THE INSTALLATIONS, BUT MERELY EXPRESSED PREPAREDNESS TO DO SO. HE ASKED WHAT KIND OF TURNOVER OF TITLE WAS CONTEMPLATED BY THE U.S. WE EXPLAINED THAT THE RTG ALREADY HELD TITLE TO THE LAND. AS TO THE BUILDINGS, TITLE TO SOME WOULD BE TURNED OVER TO THE THAI WHILE OTHERS WOULD REMAIN WITH THE U.S., ACCORDING TO THEIR FUNCTIONS. WITH REGARD TO EQUIPMENT, WHILE THAT TO BE USED BY THE THAI COULD BE TURNED OVER, IT HAD TO BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THE U.S. COULD NOT PAY MAINTENANCE COSTS IF TITLE WERE TRANSFERRED; IF ON THE OTHER HAND, THE EQUIPMENT WERE PROVIDED ON A LOAN BASIS, THE U.S. COULD MAINTAIN IT. THIS LAST POINT SEEMED TO REGISTER ON ANAND.

14. RETURNING TO THE U.S. NOTE, ANAND NOTED THAT IT KEPT PAST AGREEMENTS AND UNDERSTANDINGS IN EFFECT PENDING THE NEGOTIATION OF NEW ONES; THE THAI COULD NOT ACCEPT THIS. HE CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT HE WOULD REFRAIN FROM FORMAL COMMENT ON THE U.S. NOTE AND WOULD PUT IT ASIDE WHILE AWAITING THE U.S. RESPONSE TO THE THAI PROPOSAL.

15. THE AMBASSADOR REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE POST-MARCH 20 RESIDUAL ACTIVITIES CONTEMPLATED BY THE U.S. HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE MFA DURING A LONG SERIES OF MEETINGS. IN VIEW OF TODAY'S CONVERSATION, HE WANTED TO BE SURE HE UNDERSTOOD THE THAI POSITION. WAS IT THE THAI VIEW THAT THESE ACTIVITIES, OR ANY OF THEM, WERE NOT DESIRABLE AND WOULD THE THAI WELCOME ELIMINATION OF SOME ACTIVITIES SO AS TO EFFECT FURTHER REDUCTION
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OF THE NUMBERS OF PERSONNEL TO REMAIN IN COUNTRY? ANAND RESPONDED EMPHATICALLY THAT THE THAI TOOK NO POSITION ON THIS. WHILE THEY COULD NOT AGREE TO ANY PARTICULAR MANNING FIGURES UNTIL THESE HAD BEEN NEGOTIATED ON THE BASIS OF MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS, THEY HAD NO PARTICULAR TOTALS IN MIND.

16. THE AMBASSADOR THOUGHT SUSCEPTIBILITY OF THE THAI PRINCIPLES TO INTERPRETATION WOULD CAUSE GREAT DIFFICULTY IN WASHINGTON. FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD "THAI JURISDICTION" (PRINCIPLE 1) MEAN THAT A THAI POLICEMAN COULD ENTER THE CODE ROOM AT RAMASUN? ANAND SCOFFED AT THIS, BUT THE AMBASSADOR OBSERVED THAT WHILE WE MIGHT RECEIVE ASSURANCES OF FLEXIBILITY AND LIBERALITY OF INTERPRETATION TODAY, THAILAND WAS IN AN ELECTION PERIOD AND WE DID NOT KNOW WHO MIGHT BE FOREIGN MINISTER TWO MONTHS HENCE. ANAND BRIDLED AT THIS, CLAIMING THAT AGREEMENTS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS IN OFFICE WERE BINDING. HE SAID THE THAI, IN DEALING WITH THE U.S., DID NOT ASK WHO WOULD BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT, OR CONGRESS WOULD SUPPORT OR OVERRIDE POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS NOT THE QUESTION. THE PROBLEM LAY IN THE FACT THAT THE PRINCIPLES WERE IN SEVERAL RESPECTS VERY IMPRECISE. AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE, THE AMBASSADOR CITED PRINCIPLE 3. THIS COULD ENTAIL THE THAI OBTAINING ROOMSFUL OF DATA FROM KO KHA WHICH COULD NOT USE AND DID NOT WANT. ANAND ASSURED HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT THE RTG'S INTENTION.

17. TO UNDERLINE THE NEED FOR QUICK ACCEPTANCE OF THE THAI PRINCIPLES, CHATCHAI POINTED OUT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WAS COMMITTED TO COMPLETION OF U.S. DRAWDOWN ACTIONS BY MARCH 20. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF HAD, ONLY TWO DAYS EARLIER IN A LUCHEON CONVERSATION WITH HIM, RECOGNIZED THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF RAMASUN TO THAILAND. ANAND ASSERTED THAT THAT WAS NOT IN QUESTION. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THE QUESTION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF RAMASUN OPERATIONS TO THAILAND DID INDEED ARISE, SINCE IN THE ABSENCE OF AGREEMENT, THE INSTALLATION MIGHT BE CLOSED.

18. ANAND SAID THAT THE THAI PRINCIPLES HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE PRIME MINISTER. HE FORESAW THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF AGREEMENT, OPERATIONS WOULD BE SUSPENDED BUT THE INSTALLATION ITSELF WOULD NOT BE CLOSED. THE AMBASSADOR ANSWERED THAT THE

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NATURE OF RAMASUN OPERATIONS WAS SUCH AS TO CONSTITUTE A "GO, NO-GO" SITUATION IN WHICH OPERATIONS COULD NOT SIMPLY BE SUSPENDED FOR A TIME. HE EMPHASIZED HIS EXPECTATION THAT STATUS OF FORCES QUESTIONS WOULD BE HARD TO WORK OUT AND WOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO NEGOTIATE.

19. THE AMBASSADOR THEN REFERRED TO THE JOINT THAI-U.S. COMMITTEE. HE NOTED THAT EVEN IF IT WAS, BY THE ABSENCE OF AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLES, RESTRICTED FROM REACHING BINDING AGREEMENTS OR MAKING COMMITMENTS, IT COULD CONTINUE TO WORK OUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE VARIOUS REMAINING FACILITIES. IT WOULD ALSO BE BENEFICIAL FOR POPULAR CONSUMPTION IF IT COULD BE SAID THAT THE COMMITTEE HAD BEEN DISCUSSING ARRANGMENTS AT THE VARIOUS INSTALLATIONS. ANAND RESPONDED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO OBJECTION TO THE COMMITTEE'S CONTINUING TO DISCUSS THE DETAILS OFFUTURE ARRANGEMENTS, BUT THAT THE PRINCIPLES HAD TO BE AGREED BY THE END OF THE MONTH.

20. THE AMBASSADOR OBSERVED THAT TODAY'S CONVERSATION HAD GIVEN HIM THREE LARGE CATEGORIES OF WORK TO DO. FIRST, HE WOULD HAVE TO WORK OUT WITH WASHINGTON THE U.S. POSITION ON PRINCIPLES; SECOND, WE WOULD HAVE TO CONTINUE WORKING OUT WITH THE THAI THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS; THIRD, WE WOULD HAVE TO DEVELOP RETROGRADE PLANS SO THAT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO MOVE OUT OUR INSTALLATIONS IF AGREEMENT IN THE FIRST TWO CATEGORIES COULD NOT BE REACHED.

21. AFTER A BRIEF SILENCE TO DIGEST THIS LAST STATEMENT, ANAND, WHO WAS CLEARLY TAKEN ABACK, SAID THAT THE QUESTION OF MOVING OUT INSTALLATIONS WAS PREMATURE. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER THIS MEANT THAT ANAND DID NOT EXPECT THE INSTALLATIONS TO BE REMOVED BY MARCH 20 IF NO AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED. ANAND AVOIDED AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION, SIMPLY REPLYING THAT TOP PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO REACHING AN AGREEMENT.

22. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WILL FOLLOW SEPTTEL.
WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OC/T: LIMDIS CAPTION REMOVED AND EXDIS CAPTION
INSERTED PER INSTRUCTIONS SSO-MACFARLANE
SECRET

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